

**Sarah Holmes, Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury**

Testimony before the Committee on Children

Tuesday, March 1, 2022

**H.B. No. 5242 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN ONILNE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION TASK FORCE**

Good day, Senator Anwar, Representative Anwar, Senator Kelly, Representative Dauphinais, and members of the Committee on Children. My name is Sarah Holmes and I am a Community Educator at Safe Haven of Greater Waterbury. We are a domestic violence and sexual assault crisis agency serving 12 towns in the Greater Waterbury region. I am writing in support of H.B. No. 5242 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN ONILNE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION TASK FORCE

In the field of sexual violence prevention, we are aware that child sexual abusers and traffickers utilize social media and other online platforms to identify vulnerable youth, begin the grooming process, and engage in digital abuse. These online connections may also develop into real-world encounters in which children are sexually abused or inducted into child trafficking rings.

To aid in the prevention of these crimes, further research is needed on how predators gain access to youth online, barriers which prevent investigation and prosecution of these crimes, and identifying risk and protective factors for youth who may be targeted by predators online.

It is imperative to abuse prevention and child protection that a task force be created to gather more data on online child sexual abuse and exploitations to aid in prevention efforts to create a safer Connecticut for youth.

I urge you to support H.B. No. 5242. to make Connecticut a safer place for children and youth.

Thank you for your time.

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